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AN

APOLOGY

FOR

VILLAGE PREACHERS.

By W. KINGSBURY, M. A.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

4 3

AN

APOLOGY

FOR

VILLAGE PREACHERS;

OR,

AN ACCOUNT

Of the PROCEEDINGS and MOTIVES of

Proteſtant Diſſenters,

And SERIOUS CHRISTIANS of other Denominations,

IN THEIR ATTEMPTS,

To SUPPRESS INFIDELITY and VICE, and to SPREAD VITAL RELIGION in *Country Places*;

ESPECIALLY

Where the MEANS of PIOUS INSTRUCTION, among the POOR, ARE RARE:

With ſome ANIMADVERSIONS on an

Anonymous "APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE"

AND

Replies to Objections.

By WILLIAM KINGSBURY, M. A.

The Jews ſtirred up all the *People*,—crying out, Men of Iſrael, help! This is the man that teacheth *all men every where* againſt the people, and the LAW, and THIS PLACE. ACTS xxi. 27, 28.

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. LUKE xxiii. 34.

For neither at any time uſed we flattering words, nor a cloke of covetouſneſs; God is witneſs. I. THESS. ii. 5.

By honour and diſhonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true. II. COR. vi. 8.

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

PREFACE.

PERHAPS ſome Readers may think too much notice has been taken of an Anonymous Pamphlet, which might otherwiſe have ſunk into diſregard or oblivion.—Let it be conſidered, however, that the things which have been ſo *broadly ſpoken* by it's Author, will probably be inſinuated by more able and even excellent men: and, while they remain unacquainted with the Proceedings and Motives of Village Preachers, they may ignorantly oppoſe endeavours to obtain the benevolent end in which their pious hearts, were their prejudices removed, would ſincerely rejoice.

I have not meddled with the controverſy between the Church of England and the Diſſenters, though ſo much enlarged on by the Appellant. Neither my plan nor inclination led me to engage in that warfare. I wiſh ſerious Miniſters, in both Communions, would do all they can, in their reſpective ſpheres, to promote *pure religion*; keeping out of view thoſe *circumſtantials*, reſpecting which we differ.—Still, I muſt ſay, that Diſſenters have no reaſon to tremble for their cauſe, while oppoſed by an Adverſary who appears to know very little of the Grounds and Reaſons of our Diſſent,* and, I am ſorry to ſay, frequently makes contempt and abuſe ſupply the place of argument. The defeat of ſuch a champion would be no triumph.

* If the Reader wiſhes to ſee theſe things treated of, he may refer to Towgood's Letters to White; and with regard to "Schiſm and John "Calvin," he may conſult Sir. R. Hill's "Apology for Brotherly "Love;" where he will find peaceable Diſſenters vindicated from Schiſm by an able Church of England Divine,—and John Calvin's character ſet in a true light. (p. 179—188.)

Some

Some perhaps may ſmile at my title, as affecting quaintneſs. I confeſs I wiſh it to ſtrike the eye, in theſe days of *Apologies*. I have introduced the term "*vital religion*," for which the excellent Mr. Wilberforce has been ſo much ridiculed; and I adopt it, becauſe I would have the Reader at once underſtand *what cauſe* we wiſh to diffuſe by Village Preaching; and becauſe it imports that life, vigour, and warmth in religion, without which the moſt excellent doctrines are a dead letter; and the perſons who uſe Modes of Worſhip moſt approved among all Denominations, are little better than machines.

I have endeavoured to watch and pray againſt an improper ſpirit, that I might "ſpeak the truth in love." Should, however, any thing occur in the following pages, which may grieve any pious perſon, I intreat ſuch an one to be aſſured, that he miſtakes the temper in which the Author wrote.

I have now only to intreat the candour of my Readers, eſpecially of my Brethren, whom I have taken the liberty to addreſs. The critical eye will obſerve perhaps redundancies, omiſſions, faults in the arrangement and the ſtile, and *repetitions* of the ſame thoughts, which are introduced in various connexions, for the particular purpoſe of bringing up again and again the ends we had in view by our Village Preaching.—As a plea for the exerciſe of candour, I add, that the whole was drawn up, and prepared for the preſs, in a ſtate of great bodily weakneſs, while recovering from a ſevere and alarming indiſpoſition.

SOUTHAMPTON:
OCT. 20, 1798.

W. K.

AN

APOLOGY, &c.

TO do good to his fellow-creatures is one of the nobleſt objects that can excite the generous ambition, or occupy the active mind of man. To attempt to reſcue deathleſs ſouls from the bondage of ignorance and vice, from the tormenting rage of domineering evil paſſions, from the gnawing worm of guilt, and from endleſs miſery; to render them happy and wiſe; and to make thoſe who are likely to be peſts, bleſſings to ſociety, is a ſpecies of benevolence which is amiable and praiſeworthy, and deſerving the approbation and gratitude of all mankind.

This is the grand and gracious end of the Preaching of the Goſpel; the deſign of God in the inſtitution of this deſpiſed ordinance; and that which is, or ought to be, the firſt wiſh and

the ultimate object (in ſubordination to the divine glory) of every one who engages in that arduous employment.

Well then might we ſtand mute with aſtoniſhment, did we not know ſomething of the "enmity of the carnal mind againſt God," and the oppoſition which has in all ages been made to the glorious Goſpel, that the plans lately projected, by ſerious and benevolent Chriſtians of various denominations, for diffuſing the light and power of real, vital, and practical Chriſtianity in dark places, ſhould be ſo egregiouſly miſrepreſented as they are. They have been held up to view as monſters teeming with miſchief. There have not been wanting ſome, that have ſaid the deſign has been even to ſow the ſeeds of infidelity; others, that "their real object is not religious, "but political; and that this object leads to "alienate the attachment of the people to the "eſtabliſhed church, as the ground-work and "foundation of ſome ſecret deſign in the field of "politics." A writer, under the appellation of "a Clergyman of the Dioceſe of Saliſbury," has brought forward this cruel charge. * Fain would I hope, for the honour of the *Proteſtant* Clergy, that no one of that reſpectable order, in the

* See "An Appeal to the People, on the Alleged Cauſes of the Diſſenters' Separation," &c. p. 32.

N. B. The figures in the text will, for the future, refer to the pages of the "Appeal."

Church

Church of England, could be capable, firſt to hatch a ſcheme ſufficiently diabolical and hypocritical to have diſgraced the ancient Jeſuits, and then to lay it at the door of the Proteſtant Diſſenters. Surely it muſt have been ſome enemy who has done it, with the hope to expoſe *all* religion to common ridicule; or ſome bigoted ſon of the Church of Rome, who imagines himſelf "God's vicegerent and repreſentative;" (p. 20) "and that thoſe people, who, through a defici-"ency in their education, are incapable of forming "a deciſive and correct judgment on ſuch im-"portant ſubjects of religion, would act a ſafe and "wiſe part, *implicitly* to rely on their miniſters, "who are legally eſtabliſhed to inſtruct them." (p. 25) Is not this ſtrongly ſcented with popery?

Weak and fooliſh as the charge is, yet, in theſe days, in which ſuſpicion and a ſpirit of party ſo much prevail, it is not unlikely that it may be believed by thoſe who are ignorant of us and our principles, and who may be diſpoſed to imbibe prejudices againſt all Diſſenters, and their deſigns, without diſcrimination. I feel myſelf called upon to explain and defend the views, motives, and conduct of the itinerants, in theſe parts of the country, with which I am acquainted; and, I preſume, what will be ſaid, may be equally applicable to others who labour in the ſame way, in different parts of the kingdom.

In the year 1795, the Miſſionary Society was formed in London. A plan was ſtruck out, and has ſince been acted upon, to ſend the Goſpel to the Heathen, eſpecially into the iſlands of the Pacific Ocean, &c.* It was objected by many,—"Have "you not Heathens enough at home? Attend to "them." This ſuggeſtion awakened dormant Conſideration. She has opened her eyes, and looked around; ſhe has beheld multitudes in our neighbouring villages and foreſts, who were far from any means of inſtruction, periſhing for lack of knowledge, living without Chriſt, without hope, without God in the world. Benign Pity followed Conſideration: her heart melted and mourned. Benevolent endeavours were firſt privately exerted. At length the ſacred fire expanded it's flame, and was communicated from breaſt to breaſt, and from place to place. Situations were ſought where there was the leaſt inſtruction. We confeſs that "the "very dregs of the people we were anxious and in-"defatigable to convert; men poſſeſſed of no pro-"perty, and of underſtandings weak and unprin-"cipled, without opinion and without thought." (p. 32.) Theſe are the perſons who claimed our pity, who needed our help; and where ſhall we

* The plan has ſucceeded. The ſhip Duff, which ſailed in October, 1796, after traverſing above twice the circumference of the globe, having left the miſſionaries at Otaheite, &c., has returned ſafe, without the leaſt fatal accident.

find

find more proper objects of attention than they? Are not their ſouls as precious as thoſe of the rich in this world? And if they are "weak, unprin-"cipled, and without thought," do not they ſo much the more need to be rouſed to a ſenſe of their ſtate, inſtructed in the knowledge of ſalvation, and urged to flee from the wrath to come? Firſt of all *miniſters* went forth into ſuch places. At length, as miniſters could not be ſpared from their ſtated work, ſome of our brethren, who had been favoured with the knowledge and power of religion, and who had ſuitable talents, were ſent on the ſabbath, to inſtruct theſe deſpiſed poor in the things of God.

But what are the employments of theſe people? They read the Scripture, or ſome other good book.* The people are entirely ſilent, except when they join in ſinging Dr. Watts's Pſalms or Hymns. They then quietly attend while prayer§ is offered. The ſpeaker, according to his ability, ſometimes explains and enforces the doctrines of the Scripture. What he delivers is purely re

* This is the practice of many reſpectable Chriſtians, who have had very decent and good education. Burder's "Village Sermons" are compoſed for this very purpoſe: ſee vol. I. and II., publiſhed by Chapman, 151, Fleet-ſtreet, London, at 1s, each.

§ Vide "The Manner in which Proteſtant Diſſenters perform Prayer in Public Worſhip Vindicated," by the Author; printed for Baker, Southampton, and Chapman, London,

ligious.

ligious. He endeavours to make the people ſenſible, that they are indeed, what they confeſs in prayer, "miſerable ſinners." He ſhows them *how* they may obtain mercy; where they may find *help* to walk in righteouſneſs of life; and the manner and ſpirit in which they ſhould perform all their duties to God and man; that they ſhould be ſober, righteous, and diligent in their callings, obedient to magiſtrates, and ſubmiſſive to all lawful authority.

This was the origin, this is the practice of our little village aſſemblies. But this, it ſeems, is very formidable! A hue and cry is raiſed againſt ſome ſuppoſed "ambitious and deſigning faction," (p. 32) and an "Appeal" is made "to the people;" the Clergy are alarmed to watch our motions, and the groſſeſt charges are brought againſt us. However, it does not appear that any great harm has been done as yet. Many ſouls, "from the dregs of the people," have been reſcued from ignorance and vice; many, who were before injurious perſons, have become uſeful in ſociety; many ignorant and thoughtleſs mortals, "weak and unprincipled," have been brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jeſus; and numbers, who never before attended *any* place of worſhip, have been drawn to unite in religious exerciſes, without *ſeparation* from any church whatſoever, becauſe they never before aſſociated with any.

Let

Let the candid reader reflect, whether this method of proceeding, conſidering it's conſequences, has not ſome powerful arguments in it's behalf. Is not *every Chriſtian* bound, by the laws, ſpirit, and example of Chriſt;—by his own ſpecial obligations to Jeſus, as well as by his relation to his fellow-creatures;—to do *all the good he can?* This will not be diſowned by any ſerious mind. Not only *miniſters* therefore, but *all perſons*, who have received mercy, are bound to declare, as they have opportunity and ability, what they have known of the grace of God. The converted Samaritan woman acted on this plan of benevolence.—(John iv. 29.) She went to her countrymen, and ſaid, as a friend, to all ſhe met, "Come, ſee a man which told me "all things that ever I did!—Is not this the "Chriſt?"

In that remarkable language of invitation, (Rev. xxii. 17.) it is ſaid, "and let him that *hear-* "*eth* ſay Come," &c. The *hearer* then, who is a partaker of goſpel mercy, has a warrant to tell others of the mercy he has received. If *I* have found a medicine, which has been very beneficial in giving *me* eaſe, under great agonies of pain, and in curing a moſt dangerous and obſtinate diſeaſe; and if I ſee *others* ſick with the *ſame tormenting malady*, and ready to die; if there is no ſuitable help at hand, no ſkilful doctor in the village,

ſage, ſhall I let my neighbours ſuffer and die, becauſe I am not *regularly bred?*—becauſe I have not had the univerſity diploma, or the college licence? Surely No. I mean not to plead any thing in favour of an uneducated irregular miniſtry, in ordinary caſes. I mean only to ſhow the propriety of employing occaſional practitioners, who underſtand the diſeaſe and the cure of human nature, where regular and profeſſional men are wanting or negligent: and I truſt that the time is coming, when every eminent miniſter will ſay, in this caſe, with Moſes, "Would to God that "all the Lord's people were prophets."

I now beg the reader's attention to the MOTIVES of theſe itinerants. They profeſs thoſe which are common to all good men, who undertake any ſpiritual good work,—compaſſion for the beſt intereſts of mankind. The candidate for holy orders, in the Church of England, declares that he is "moved by the Holy Ghoſt." The Diſſenter makes ſome profeſſion of the purity and benevolence of his views and wiſhes, at his entrance on the paſtoral character; and thus the Itinerant pleads,—"We ſee multitudes of our fellow-crea-"tures wandering far from God, ignorant of the "way to true happineſs. We ourſelves were once "in the ſame ſituation. But we have found Him "who is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life;' "and we wiſh to lead others to Him. We long

"for

" for thoſe who *are* ſtill, what *we* once *were*,
" 'fooliſh, diſobedient, deceived, ſerving divers
" luſts and pleaſures, living in malice and envy,
" hateful, and hating one another,' to be acquain-
" ted with the 'philanthropy of God our Saviour;
" to be renewed by the Holy Ghoſt, which he has
" ſhed on us abundantly; that being juſtified by
" his grace, they might be made heirs according
" to the hope of eternal life.'" (Tit. iii. 3—7.)
And will any one deny this to be an honourable and praiſeworthy motive?

You applaud a Howard, who, forſaking his comfortable home and his country, yielding up his eaſe, riſking his health, and even his life, went to viſit the ſick and the wretched, the guilty and hardened offender in his dungeon; not to deliver him from his chains and condemnation, but only to ameliorate his condition *in the preſent life*:*— and is there nothing commendable in the ſelf-denying zeal of thoſe men, who make many ſacrifices of perſonal reputation and enjoyment, incurring much ſhame, reproach, and loſs, to carry the glad

* I eſteem it an honour to have been numbered among the friends of Howard, who often viſited me, and for whoſe memory I have an affectionate reverence; but I conſider a Whitefield, and a Weſley, croſſing oceans, and traverſing rude countries, with immenſe labour; a Brainerd, in America, encountering every hardſhip of weather, and every danger and difficulty, among ſavage Indians, with a view and wiſh to bring them to God and happineſs, as ſtill greater heroes, and much greater friends to mankind.

tidings of *eternal ſalvation* to ſinners, under the more tremendous ſentence of God's law; "to "bind up the broken in heart;" to "proclaim the "opening of the priſon" to them who were "tied "and bound with the chain of their ſins;" to adminiſter to thoſe who were dying of the *moral plague*, the medicine of the Goſpel?

The man that brings the water of a river into a town before deſtitute of ſupply, with immenſe labour and expence, is deſervedly honoured of his country;—and is there nothing worthy eſteem in him, who does what in him lies, to convey the "water of life" to thoſe who are parching for thirſt in a wilderneſs "where no water is?" The Preaching of the Goſpel is the grand appointed medium by which the God of Grace has communicated the knowledge and enjoyment of ſaving truth, in all ages. (Mark xvi. 15, 16. I. Cor. i. 18.) Is it not benevolent to introduce the means of grace, where they were not enjoyed before?

But theſe alleged motives will be called in queſtion. They will be laughed at by the infidel, under the mock title of an "heroic paſſion for "ſaving ſouls." They will be treated with contempt by thoſe, who, "deſpiſing their own ſouls," neglect thoſe of other men. It is to very little purpoſe to enter into a ſerious argument with a buffoon. Equally vain would it be, to reaſon with perſons who make the miniſtry a trade,

trade, and who deal in the "ſouls of men." (Rev. xviii. 13.) Blinded by covetouſneſs and ambition, warped by pride and the ſpirit of the world, *they* will not allow to others the benevolence to the ſpiritual intereſts of their fellow-immortals, which is not felt in their own boſoms. But I believe there are, in our country, multitudes of worthy and excellent miniſters and others, both in and out of the Eſtabliſhment, who *do* know the worth and danger of the ſouls of men, and long for their ſalvation; and to them I would make my appeal,—Whether it is not an invaſion of the prerogative of God, who judgeth the heart; as well as illiberal to a great degree; to attribute to men *other* motives than thoſe they profeſs, until, by their outward conduct, they are convicted of inſincerity? Such a ſuſpicion, applied to *common* charitable actions, as feeding the poor, adminiſtering medicines, &c., would be loudly condemned, as illiberal and unjuſt in the extreme; and why, in the name of candour and common ſenſe, ſhould endeavours to promote their beſt intereſts be branded with the moſt cruel imputations?

Let us aſk what may be the probable motives of theſe men and their coadjutors, if their own allegations are not to be credited? What *uſual* ſpring of human action will the moſt prejudiced imagine to give energy to their conduct? Can worldly GAIN be their object? The Appellant has

indeed aſſerted, (p. 83.) "that theſe men do ac-
"tually, at this moment, receive a ſalary, from an
"aſſociation of members formed for that purpoſe."
I call upon him to prove his aſſertion. In the mean while, I pledge myſelf with the public, that it is entirely groundleſs.* Some of thoſe who go into the villages, though not rich, are reputable as to their outward circumſtances, and would ſcorn a fee. And thoſe who are poorer are only allowed their expences, when they leave home. This is all their ſtipend. They are like thoſe primitive itinerants, who, "for the name's ſake of Chriſt, "went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles; "whom Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-"eminence, not only would not receive, but "prated againſt with malicious words, and forbade "thoſe that would, and caſt them out of the "church."—III. John, 7, 9, 10. But from what funds could ariſe ſalaries for fifty men from *one place only?*—Whence then ſalaries for more, from other towns? Surely we muſt have immenſe revenues! "Riſum teneatis amici?" HONOUR ſurely cannot attach to this practice. Itinerants are often treated with the utmoſt contempt and abuſe: they are deſpiſed and neglected by the worldly-minded

* Equally ſo is his aſſertion, as to the number of thoſe who leave Saliſbury every ſabbath; which his multiplying glaſs has enlarged to *fifty*;—why had he not ſaid *five hundred?* The high authority, from which he profeſſes to have received his documents, *muſt* have been miſinformed.

and

and the rigid, even of their own ſect; and ſometimes they labour amidſt ſcoffing, deriſion, and even perſonal danger, from other people.

But inſinuations of the baſeſt kinds of motives are thrown out againſt them. The Anonymous Accuſer (p. 33.) ſays, "Their ſole object in "view, I cannot prevail on myſelf to believe, is "that of ſerving Chriſt."—"Their conduct in- "ſinuates into my mind the opinion, that their "real object is not religious, but political; and "that this object leads them to alienate the at- "tachment of the people to the eſtabliſhed "Church, as the groundwork and foundation of "ſome ſecret deſigns in the field of politics;" (pp. 32, 33.)—and then the Writer proceeds to rouſe "the eſtabliſhed Clergy, and every ſound "patriot, to undeceive the deluded multitude on "religious doctrines; to ſtrip from their political "deſigns the hypocritical veil, with which it has "ever been invariably their adopted practice to "conceal them."

Were this Gentleman indeed "the vicegerent "of God,"—did he come with a commiſſion, not of *Oyer* and Terminer, but merely to *determine* and *condemn*,—we might well tremble at his awful aſpect and terrible voice. But we thank God that this Writer is not the ſearcher of our hearts; and that *his opinion* will not ſtamp the authentic mark of deteſtable hypocriſy on the

ma-

motives of theſe people. It ſeems they have ſome deep "political deſign." In the name of the country, which I love,—the King, whom I honour, and affectionately pray for,—the Conſtitution I revere,—the Laws, which I reſpect,—I ſay ſolemnly, if ſuch villains, as he repreſents, are to be found,—ſtrip them of their odious veil, (nay let him ſtrip them naked, if he pleaſe) expoſe them to the inſulting croud, and puniſh them with *his* ſtripes, and then they will ſmart indeed.

But let no man at once be judge, jury, witneſs, and executioner. Before he proceed to execution, let them have a fair trial: let their accuſers be brought from behind the ſcreen, and prove matters of fact face to face. Let no anonymous accuſer be believed. Let no man's private "opinion" be ſet up as infallible.

This Writer (in p. 40.) brings in the venerable and learned Biſhop of Saliſbury, in ſuch a way, as to lead his readers ſtrongly to ſuſpect, that he had *his Lordſhip's authority* for his aſſertion of the "fifty" men going forth from Saliſbury, &c.; and likewiſe that that Prelate was of the ſame opinion with himſelf, as to the intention of our preaching political tenets, under the maſk of ſerving God. His Lordſhip, we humbly hope, from what we have ever conceived of his learning, his ſagacity, philanthropy, and juſtice, would ſcorn to give his ſanction to an

aſſertion

aſſertion which can be ſo eaſily diſproved, and to an inſinuation ſo bitterly ſevere. Yet, as his Lordſhip may perhaps, in his exalted ſtation, not have the opportunity of receiving *unadulterated intelligence*, as to the conduct and motives of Diſſenters in his dioceſe, in regard to their endeavours to ſpread the knowledge of the Goſpel; and as his mind may poſſibly be impreſſed with unfavourable ideas concerning them, through miſrepreſentation; it is moſt earneſtly wiſhed, that he would admit into his preſence any one or more of their miniſters, to hear from their lips anſwers to any allegations their adverſaries might bring againſt them, or explanations of any part of their conduct. And we intreat this reverend Prelate, that he would warn his Clergy againſt that bitter and inflammatory ſpirit, which this concealed Writer, under the reſpectable name of "a Clergyman of the Dioceſe of Saliſbury," ſhows againſt every claſs of perſons who are not members of the Church of England, as if they were all enemies to regal government, &c.; leſt it widen the breach we ſhould endeavour to heal, and inflame worthy men one againſt another, in a time when we have all reaſon heartily to unite againſt the common enemy of religion and our country.

Let the reader alſo impartially conſider, whether there is any thing in the manner and circumſtances

cumſtances of Village Preaching, as carried on by our Itinerants, calculated to ſow the ſeeds of treachery and ſedition, (p. 39.) which our Author ſtrongly inſinuates, with giving them a very hard name,—"the enemies of our happy "Conſtitution," as he paſſes on. The places in which the congregations aſſemble are *open* to all comers. Every one who is diſpoſed may attend to inſpect and hear what is done or ſaid. Many have attended, whoſe duty, and inclination alſo, would have urged them to have taken very ſpeedy notice, if any thing ſeditious had been brought forward. Gentlemen,* Magiſtrates, Clergymen, have occaſionally been preſent; and ſome "ſuſ-"picious, circumſpect, and vigilant" enough. The worſhip is conducted in the *moſt public manner*. Not one of the Preachers has ever been charged, otherwiſe than by general and groundleſs inſinuation, with ſpreading principles, by words or books, of a political tendency. The Church of England has not, to my knowledge, been attacked: nor have her miniſters, or their

* It is with pleaſure I can here relate, that a Gentleman (I think a Magiſtrate) who attended, *out of curioſity*, a young miniſter, who was lately exhorting the people to repentance, in a country place, was ſo far from being diſpleaſed with what he heard, that he went up to him, after the ſervice was concluded, thanked him for his ſermon, and aſſured him that he hoped he himſelf was endeavouring to attain the ſame object one way, (by enforcing the laws of the land) as he, the miniſter, was aiming at in another, namely, to reform the people.

con-

conduct, ever been blamed by our Village Preachers; ſo far as they have acted agreeably to the dignity and obligations of the ſacred function.

Totally deſtitute of *facts*, to ſupport his malignant invectives againſt the modern Diſſenters, our Author leads his readers back an hundred and fifty years, into the confuſed times of Charles I.; and charges "all the diſtreſsful circumſtances, "and tragical events, which marked the reign of "that unhappy prince," on their anceſtors, as "their principal and active promoters." (pp. 34, 35.) Here he ſeems to triumph, as if ſure of his prey. He puts queſtion after queſtion, and anſwers them himſelf, with as infallible a tone, as if no one dared, or was able, to ſay a ſyllable in defence of the culprits. But had he been a little deeper read in hiſtory than a boy at ſchool,—had he *been diſpoſed* to have gone a little further in his inquiries into the affair,—or had he reaſoned a little cloſely on it,—he might ſoon have ſeen how improbable, as well as untrue it is, that ſo ſmall a part of the community ſhould have been able to bring about ſuch mighty changes. As to the unhappy civil war, which diſtracted and rent the country, for ſo many years,—this was waged *between the King* and the *Parliament*. But was the Long Parliament compoſed of Diſſenters? No. From the noble hiſtorian, who is generally reſorted to, as the great oracle of truth, by our

high-church writers, we may collect, that they were members of the Eſtabliſhment, and friendly to epiſcopacy. Lord Clarendon, beſides giving particular characters of ſeveral noblemen in the Houſe of Lords, who were active in the war; and alſo of the Speaker of the Houſe of Commons, Mr. Pym, and others,—ſays in general: "In the Houſe of Commons were many perſons "of wiſdom and gravity, who, being poſſeſſed "of plentiful fortunes, though undevoted enough "to the court, had all imaginable duty for the "King, and affection for the Government, eſta-"bliſhed by law or ancient cuſtom; and, with-"out doubt, *the major part of that body conſiſted of "men, who had no mind to break the peace of the "kingdom, or to make any conſiderable alteration in "the Government of Church or State.*"* This, from ſuch a writer, is a ſufficient proof how groundleſs is the common notion, among prejudiced and ignorant people, who take things upon hearſay evidence, without examination, that the *Diſſenters* were "the principal and active pro-"moters of the rebellion." And when "the un-"fortunate Charles was brought to the block," ſo far were the *Diſſenters* from being excluſively concerned in that bloody buſineſs, that forty-ſeven

* See Clarendon's Hiſtory, 8vo edit. vol. I. p. 184, and elſewhere throughout his volumes, in his characters of particular men.

of

of their moſt eminent miniſters in London ſubſcribed a very animated and earneſt Proteſt againſt it; and preſented it to the General and the Army: it was publiſhed, and dated January 18, 1648.* And afterwards, fifty-ſeven of them publiſhed a vindication of themſelves from the unjuſt aſperſion, which concludes with praying God to "reſtrain the violence of men, that they "may *not draw on themſelves and the kingdom the* "*blood of their Sovereign.*"† Not one Independent Miniſter, as I can find, declared his approbation of it, except Hugh Peters and John Goodwin; both of whom were equally infamous among Independents as among others. Many of them proteſted againſt it, and publiſhed, and preſented to Gen. Fairfax and the Council, their "Humble Advice," &c. Dr. Lewis Du Moulin, a zealous Churchman, Prebendary of Canterbury, and Hiſtory Profeſſor at Oxford, who lived through thoſe days, ſays,—"that no party of men, *as a religious* "*body*, were the actors in this tragedy; but that "it was the contrivance of an army, which, like "that of King David, was a medley or collection "of *all* parties that were diſcontented; ſome "*Courtiers*, ſome *Preſbyterians*, ſome *Epiſcopalians*,

* See a part of the Addreſs, in Neal's "Hiſtory of the Puritans," vol. III. p. 532—535, 8vo. edit.

† Neal, p. 536.

"few of *any* ſect, but moſt of *none*, or elſe of the "religion of *Thomas Hobbes* (the atheiſt), and Dr. "Scarborough; not to mention the PAPISTS, "who had the GREATEST HAND IN IT OF "ALL." *

But the point in queſtion is not what Diſſenters were a century and half ago. It was the faſhion and ſpirit of the times, for forty years after the death of Charles I., for the different parties to draw each others characters, with all the extravagance of line and colouring, which prejudice and the force of paſſion could, with any appearance of probability, mingle together and lay on. Diſſenters, being the weak and deſpiſed minority, were the moſt violently caricatured. But time and long acquaintance have, for many years paſt, been ſoftening the aſperity of our forefathers againſt each other. The ſpirit of their children was becoming milder. Serious Churchmen and Diſſenters were happily united as far as they *could unite*, "uſque ad aras;" and peaceably allowing each other to differ in non-eſſentials, went on quietly, as fellow-ſubjects, and fellow-country-

* I ſhould not have thought it worth while to have taken up ſo much of my reader's time on this antiquated ſubject, were it not for the attempts which are now making, by men of more conſequence than our Author, to hold up Diſſenters, as ſuch, to the odium of their countrymen, as the authors of former calamities, and as ſtill plotting new ones.—May God open their eyes, and pardon their ſin!

men,

men, wiſhing well to our common King and Country, and to the great cauſe of common Chriſtianity. But now, in the year 1798, an Anonymous Writer, ſtarting up in a fury, exclaims, "that the *whole collective body* have, *at all* "*times, uniformly diſplayed* the ſame hoſtility to "*regal government.*" (p. 35.) And again,—"What-"ever difference of opinion may ariſe among "them, on the ſubject of religion, they *are united* "*in the ſame inveterate hatred,* againſt REGAL "as well as epiſcopal government. This remains, "and ever will remain, a permanent and funda-"mental principle." (p. 38.)

Theſe bitter and unqualified aſſertions, tending to *ſtir* and *keep up* an *irreconcileable* ſpirit of averſion towards Diſſenters, are as groſs a libel, and as palpable a falſehood, as ever dropped from the pen of an enemy. We deeply regret ſuch a ſpirit, if exiſting in the breaſt of a *real* Clergyman. Who that knows the Proteſtant Diſſenters, knows not, that, as a body,* they have been uniformly and invariably attached to the Conſtitution, as ſettled in 1688, and to the Houſe of Hanover? Let their ADDRESSES TO THE THRONE, on various great, trying, and *public*

* Individuals among them, as in the Eſtabliſhment, who have attended to politics more than to religion, may have been blamable for raſh expreſſions and conduct. But is a whole religious body to be condemned for the follies of individuals?

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occaſions;—let the GRACIOUS ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF OUR SOVEREIGNS of their loyalty and affection;—let the many *loyal* SERMONS* preached and publiſhed by them on remarkable events, relating to the Royal Family;—let the conſtant petitions that are put up to heaven for the King and Family, in our congregations,—and the pſalms which are uſually ſung in our worſhip;†—let the liberal ſubſcription of the wealthy among them towards the VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION,—and the ſpirit and manner in which they have come forth, in the *preſent armed aſſociations*, with others, to DEFEND THEIR COUNTRY and SOVEREIGN, from foes at home and abroad,—ſpeak for them; and teſtify whether Diſſenters, *as ſuch*, "have uniformly diſplayed "their hoſtility to regal government:" and at this time, King George, and the Conſtitution as fixed by law, conſiſting of King, Lords, and Commons, have not more real, hearty, and *diſintereſted* friends any where, than among the ſerious and religious Diſſenters, who enjoy no emoluments either in Church or State, and who take the Scriptures as the great and only rule of faith, conſcience,

* Particularly on his Majeſty's happy recovery; to which the Author had the honour to contribute.

† See Watts's Pſalms; pſm. xviii. part II. C. M.; pſm. xxi. C. M.; pſm. lxxv. L. M.; and hymn cxi. of book II., which breathes this loyal wiſh,—"Long may the King our Sovereign live."

and

and practice. Indeed, the religion of the Bible, which we teach, and which we wiſh to be more generally known in all our hamlets and villages, forbids every thing which borders on ſedition and treaſon; condemns thoſe who "*deſpiſe governments*, "are *ſelf-willed*, and *ſpeak evil of dignities*;" inculcates ſubmiſſion, ſubordination, and obedience to "higher powers," in caſes not inconſiſtent with our obedience to God; enjoins to "honour the "King," and to "pray for all that are in au-"thority." It breathes love, kindneſs, compaſſion, meekneſs, gentleneſs, forgiveneſs of enemies, and every principle and temper which is lovely and praiſeworthy, and which can "adorn "the doctrine of God our Saviour."

On the whole, we truſt, that our *motives* are ſuch as will juſtify our conduct before pious and candid men, and will not be diſapproved by the Searcher of Hearts, to whom we make our ultimate appeal.

After all, many OBJECTIONS, againſt theſe attempts to ſpread the Goſpel in Villages, will be ſtarted. Some may perhaps urge, that it *endangers the eſtabliſhed Church*. But doth not that great fabric ſtand on too firm a foundation of *laws and ſtatutes*, cuſtom and general opinion, for the puny endeavours of our poor Itinerants (had ſuch a mad ſcheme ever entered their minds) to over-

overturn? They love her *doctrines;* they meddle not with her *diſcipline;* many of them admire, and ſometimes adopt, parts of her *liturgy.* Her *dignities* and *revenues* are equally out of their *reach* and *deſire. Tithes* and *fees,* enforced by law, *muſt* be paid to the pariſh miniſter. Wherein, then, is the *Eſtabliſhment* endangered?

But it may be further objected, that Village Preaching has an imperceptible tendency to *draw people off from the Church.* How ſo? Are theſe low, "ſelf-inſtructed, ſelf-ordained "Diſſenting Preachers, theſe Tailors, Cabinet-"makers, Shoemakers, Coblers, Bakers, Black-"ſmiths, &c." (p. 18, note.) "who can furniſh "no inſtruction,—theſe blind leaders of the "blind,"*—ſuddenly become ſuch ſtrong reaſoners and perſuaſive orators, as to draw away multitudes of people after them?—Or are the arguments for adherence to the Church ſo *weak,* as that theſe "*blind* leaders" can eaſily confute them? But no one need be in any trepidation. It is not the wiſh or the buſineſs of theſe Village

* Some of theſe ſentiments and expreſſions have been already borrowed and retailed in the pulpit.—I would beg my readers to obſerve what the Apoſtles of Chriſt were, when firſt called to their office,—*fiſhermen, tent-makers,* &c.; and alſo, that when Jeſus Chriſt, the carpenter's ſon, ſpake of the "blind leaders," &c., he did not refer to his humble Diſciples, but to the proud Scribes and Phariſees, who thought *they* were the only qualified teachers of the people.

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Lecturers, to ſay any thing as to the controverſy between the Diſſenters and the Church. Their object is to *prove*, in plain ſimple language, the *truth of the Scriptures; to counteract the poiſon of infidelity*, which has been ſo aſſiduouſly ſpread through the land; to *warn againſt the pernicious principles of* PAINE; to ſhow the inhabitants the miſery of a fallen ſtate, the odiouſneſs and danger of vice, the gulph of eternal deſtruction which is before them; and to urge them to flee to Him, who alone can deliver from the wrath to come. Surely it is paying an ill compliment to the preaching of the Clergy, if ſuch preaching as *this* will draw their people away! But the fact is, that the Village Teachers go, for the moſt part, into places where there are *no* pariſh churches, or where the ſervices are *ſeldom* performed, or at *uncertain hours*, which the pariſhioners are not apprized of, or in the *moſt curſory* and haſty manner.* I can declare, on my own certain knowledge, that the hearers in Villages have earneſtly been exhorted to *attend* the neareſt church, when they could; and the *time* of Village Services has been ſo regulated, as not to interfere with that of Public Worſhip, when it was certainly known.—Again, it may be urged againſt this new way,

* It would be eaſy for the Writer to bring inſtances of each of theſe particulars. He can truly ſay he has not ſearched them out. They came accidentally to his knowledge.

 that

that it leſſens the reverence of the lower people for the Sacred Order of the Clergy. Should this be the caſe, it will ariſe, I preſume, from the Clergy's deficiency reſpecting either their *doctrine, temper*, or *practice*; and if ſo, whoſe fault will it be? As to defect of *doctrine*, the Anonymous Author himſelf acknowledges, "there may be perhaps ſome juſt-"neſs in this complaint;" (p. 18.) and "annexes "to his opinion" the much reſpected names of the Biſhops of Saliſbury and Durham; that "the fun-"damental doctrines of Chriſtianity are not ſuffici-"ently inculcated." To which alſo may be added the obſervations of Biſhop Horſeley, in his Charge to the Clergy of the Dioceſe of St. David. Let any attentive hearer compare the ſermons, which are uſually delivered from the pulpit, with the ſentiments of the reading deſk, and the Articles and Homilies of the Church, and he will ſoon be convinced of the truth of the acknowledgement.* This is one *grand cauſe* of the departure of many from the Church of England, and of her Miniſters being neglected.† The people want the ſubſtantial Bread of Life; and if they are entertained with that which is *not bread*, is it to be wondered at, that they ſhould ſeek it where they can find it, even though it ſhould be comparatively *coarſely*

* See Mr. Wilberforce's "Practical View," p. 382, 8vo. ed.

† See Sir Richard Hill's "Apology for Brotherly Love, and for the Doctrines of the Church of England," particularly letter v.

prepared?

prepared? The good old Doctrines of the Church then, muſt be preached with *clearneſs, plainneſs, energy,* and *perſevering diligence;* as they were by Biſhops Jewel,* Babington, Hopkins, Uſher; and as in modern days by many excellent miniſters; and then the people would not leave the Church, on account of *doctrines.*

But Preaching is not the only thing to be attended to. Uniformity in temper and conduct, muſt recommend and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. The people will always reſpect a man who is all of a piece; who exemplifies out of the pulpit, what he recommends in it; who anſwers St. Paul's deſcription of a paſtor,—(I. Tim. iii. 2—7.) "*blameleſs, vigilant, ſober,* "*of good behaviour, given to hoſpitality, apt* (i. e. "able and willing) *to teach; not given to wine,* "*no ſtriker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient,* "*not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well* "*his own houſe, having his children in ſubjection*

* Biſhop of Saliſbury, from 1560 to 1571: "who was," ſays the honourable author of his life, "always travelling about his dioceſe, "and preaching wherever he came." See p. 42 of his Life, prefixed to his "Apology for the Church of England."

Being naturally of a ſpare and thin body, his friends perſuaded him to abate ſomewhat of his exceſſive labours; he replied, "a Biſhop ſhould die preaching." Well might he be called by Humphrey, his Biographer, in his printed epitaph, from which that on the Biſhop's grave-ſtone was abridged,—"GEMMA GEMMARUM." See his Life, pp. 52, 53; and Biographia Evangelica, vol. II. p. 122.

" *with all gravity; not a novice, leſt being lifted up*
" *with pride he fall into the condemnation of the*
" *devil. Moreover, he muſt have a good report*
" *of them which are without, leſt he fall into reproach,*
" *and the ſnare of the devil.*"

What an irreſiſtible charm is there in the lovely temper and pattern of a miniſter, formed after the model of the lowly, ſelf-denying, and laborious Jeſus! It ſilences and convinces, if it does not conquer prejudice. It powerfully awes, it almoſt terrifies, the profane and profligate; and compels them to flee, as if aſhamed. It claims the reſpect of the rich and the great, even though they do not love religion. And when it is evident that a paſtor has a parental concern for the inſtruction and improvement, the peace and comfort and the everlaſting ſalvation of his flock, and their little ones,--eſteem, veneration, affection, gratitude, will ſo powerfully bind them to him, that it will be no eaſy thing for Itinerants, or any others, to draw them away. But, if there be in the conduct of a paſtor of *any denomination*, the *reverſe* of all this;—if he make the profane and the lewd, and the vain and the gay, his *choſen* and *general* companions, becauſe they are *wealthy* and *faſhionable*,—becauſe they have *power*, *patronage*, and *influence*; — if he drink with the drunken, ſwear with the profane, or encourage ſwearing, or ſneering at godlineſs, by his countenance;

nance;—if he conſume his precious time, which ought to be improved in meditating and ſtudying the Scriptures, in *vain and worldly* amuſements, as *cards*, *balls*, *races*, or *plays*;—is negligent of his flock;—is proud and haughty, and condeſcendeth not to men of low degree,—never converſes with them about their eternal concerns,—never teaches their children, &c.;—the common people *will* be ſo impertinent, as to make their obſervations and remarks; and to draw compariſons between miniſters who are exemplary, and thoſe who are not. The religious *farmer* and his wife, the village "blackſmith and cobler," the ploughman and the dairywoman, who read their Bible, *will* diſtinguiſh between the ſhepherds who feed themſelves, and care not for the flock, and thoſe who are anxious to bring wandering ſheep home to the Great Shepherd. Nor is it in the power of arguments the moſt ſpecious, or pretences or arts the moſt ſolemn, to conceal the difference, or avoid the detection.

Objections, to the practice I am vindicating, may alſo be urged by DISSENTERS.

Some may ſay,—"It is a low, mean, diſre-"putable procedure, to go among the poor il-"literate vulgar: it is quite methodiſtical,"* &c.

* This is a convenient word, often uſed as a vehicle of contempt; though perhaps a term as vague and uncertain in it's ſignification as any in our language.

To this we reply, by aſking, whether our bleſſed Lord did not give it as one diſtinguiſhing mark of the divinity of his religion, to the meſſengers of John, that "*the poor* have the Goſpel "preached to them?" And is it not the buſineſs and the duty of thoſe, who wiſh to be like their Great Shepherd, *under Him*, and as his ſervants, "to ſeek and to ſave them that were *loſt?*" And doth not Chriſt bid his miniſters go forth into the "highways and hedges," and conſtrain men to come in to the goſpel banquet? As to the *vulgar*, their ſouls are as precious as the ſouls of them who are in the higheſt ſtations; (ſee pp. 10, 11, of this work;) and as to the *ſhame* and *reproach* attending the buſineſs, wo be to us if we take not up our croſs, and follow a deſpiſed Maſter. (II. Tim. ii. 12.) But if our Itinerants be ſet up as the objects of cenſure by their elder brethren, let them reply, as Paul,—"*Now* YE *are full*, "*now* YE *are rich*: WE *are fools for Chriſt's ſake*, "*but* YE *are wiſe in Chriſt*; WE *are weak*, *but* YE "*are ſtrong*; YE *are honourable*, *but* WE *are de*-"*ſpiſed.*" (I. Cor. iv. 8, 10.)

Others may ſay,—"It is *diſorderly*, and con-"trary to our uſual practice." The *latter* is granted; but perhaps it ought to be owned with regret and ſhame. O! what might thoſe of us, who are in the advance of life, have done for the glory of Chriſt, and the ſalvation of ſouls, had

we been more zealous and diligent in our younger days! But the *omiſſions*, even of good men, muſt not be pleaded as *precedents*; and their *examples* muſt not be ſet up as *ſtandards*, from which no deviation is to be allowed. But yet, if we look back to the practice of our venerable and excellent forefathers, of the laſt century, we ſhall find numerous inſtances among them, of a bleſſed and ſelf-denying zeal to diffuſe the ſavour of the knowledge of Chriſt around them, in their neighbouring villages and hamlets.—As to the objection reſpecting *order*,—Is any divine inſtitution, any part of the diſcipline and rules of our churches, invaded or broken through by our excurſive endeavours? It has been an old practice with ſtrict congregational churches, to call and ſend forth men of talents and piety, and who have a deſire to do good to ſouls, to the work of the miniſtry, ſometimes before, ſometimes after they have received inſtruction in their ſeminaries. —Are our Itinerants objected to?—We ſeek after ſuch as are the *beſt qualified* as to knowledge and talents; and we are not without the hope of providing ſome further ſuitable *education* for thoſe who may need it. And it ſhould be obſerved, that theſe unlearned men, who are *occaſionally employed* in Village Service, are not engaged as *Paſtors* over ſettled Congregations, but are only employed as

Helpers,*

*Helpers,** in breaking up the fallow ground, and preparing, under the divine bleſſing, little plan-

* *Under the Law*, when the Prieſts were *too few*, or *not prepared* or *ſanctified* for the performance of their office, Levites were called in to aſſiſt them; which was not ſtrictly regular, but the neceſſity of the caſe called for it. (II. Chron. xxix. 34.) *In the primitive Church* "God ſet ſome who were Apoſtles; ſecondarily, Prophets; "thirdly, Teachers (*i. e.* Paſtors of Churches); after that, Mira-"cles; then, Gifts of Healing, HELPS," &c. Learned men have been much perplexed to diſcover what this word peculiarly pointed at. Being found in ſuch honourable company, preceded by "mi-"raculous healing," and followed with "governments," (meaning thoſe who were endowed with the power of curing diſeaſes, and capacity for the rule of church affairs,) we cannot ſuppoſe it to deſcribe any *menial office* in the Church, which required neither gifts nor true religion. The original term imports the adminiſtration of relief and aſſiſtance, *conjointly with others*; and as the connexion ſpeaks of the *gathering*, *uniting*, and *edifying* of the members of the body of Chriſt, and of the regard that is to be paid to the *meaneſt* member, I preſume we may refer this term, "Helps," to thoſe perſons who *aſſiſted* the ſuperior officers of the Church in occaſional ſervices, and particularly in inſtructing the ignorant, and in endeavouring to cultivate the knowledge of Chriſtianity among the young and the poor. Such "Helpers in Chriſt" were Priſcilla and Aquila to the venerable Paul (Rom. xvi. 3.); ſuch, perhaps, was Urbane alſo (Rom. xvi. 9.): and thus the Churches, *after* the days of the Apoſtles, had their *Catechiſts* and *Acolyths*, perſons appointed by the Church, choſen out of *any order*, to inſtruct the ignorant and the poor. (See Encyc. Britan. on both thoſe words.) It is ſtill more clear, however, that in the laſt days of the amiable and aged Apoſtle John, there were thoſe who "*went forth*" for this ſervice; left their comfortable habitations; gave up, for a ſeaſon at leaſt, their own private ſpiritual enjoyments, in the communion of ſaints, to labour, without any pecuniary reward, in ſcattering the precious ſeed of truth; whom that hoary Elder cordially recommends to the hoſpitality and aſſiſtance of his friend Gaius and others. (III. John, 6, 7, 8.)

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tations, hereafter, we truſt, to be incloſed as gardens for God on earth, and nurſeries for heaven.

Again, it may be aſked,—" *If your Miniſters* " *engage in this ſervice, muſt it not occupy much of* " *their time, abridge their ſtudies, and leſſen their* " *attention to their own Flocks?*" We acknowledge that, in pretending to provide for thoſe *abroad*, it would be highly criminal to neglect thoſe *at home*. But let it be ſeriouſly conſidered, how many miniſters there are, who, after having done what they have accounted their duty to their own Congregations, find yet *ſome time* which they can ſpare for various occaſions as they ariſe. Are there not many hours, my Brethren, which might be ſaved from unneceſſary *ſleep*; from uſeleſs, deſultory, or pernicious *reading*; from a ſpecious indolence falſely called *ſtudy*; from idle and impertinent *diſcourſe*; and from long unprofitable *viſits*, which might be ſpent to great advantage, if judiciouſly and conſcientiouſly collected and arranged, in viſiting a neighbouring Village Congregation, and in dropping a word of exhortation or comfort to thoſe who might be willing to hear? Brethren, *diligence will beget diligence*: the more we do, humbly and honeſtly, for the glory of our Maſter and the ſervice of mankind, while health and ſtrength continue, and ſpirits abound, the more we ſhall be diſpoſed and qualified to do. And will my younger bre-

thren permit one, who has not been altogether inactive for five and thirty years, (though he ſees abundant cauſe for ſhame and ſelf-reprehenſion, for being ſo lukewarm in the cauſe of ſouls) to ſay, that the labours of the miniſtry have, he thinks, leſs injured his health and ſpirits, than the comparative eaſe and quiet of his brethren, who have been afraid of weather and fatigue, have promoted theirs. However, it is not every man's duty to tread in the ſteps of others. Elder men cannot follow their younger brethren in all their exertions. Their ſtrength and ſituations will not permit. But ſhould they not rejoice in them; pray for them; adviſe, warn, and encourage them; and, inſtead of pouring cold water on their zeal, and throwing out inſinuations to their diſadvantage, help forward the work of the Lord? In order, however, more fully to anſwer the objection, let it be obſerved, that in ſeveral parts of the County ſupernumerary miniſters are about to be provided, under the name of Itinerants, whoſe buſineſs it will be to travel from place to place, and occaſionally to aſſiſt our ſtated paſtors, while they viſit the Villages.

But will any ſay, *this is not a proper time for ſuch exertions.—Your activity will create alarm?* We reply, it is *always* a time for doing good. The *preſent* only is *our* time. *We* muſt work while it is day; *our* night is coming when we can

can no longer work. Let thoſe who are *alarmed* inquire into our conduct and our motives. We have no ſecrets we deſire to conceal. We wiſh to convince the ſuſpicious by evident facts. The ſpirit of the Goſpel we labour to diffuſe, will not only comfort and cheer the hearts of wretched ſinners; but it will *draw off the attention of men from the politics of this world, to ſpiritual and everlaſting things.* Let but the greater and infinitely more important objects of ſalvation and eternity occupy their minds, they will leave but a ſmall portion of time or room for thoſe concerns, which do not immediately relate to their ſpecial duties. They will more attend to their *Bible* than a newſpaper; and *that*, under divine teaching, will render men good *ſubjects;* render the poor contented and happy in their ſtations, and diligent, ſober, honeſt, faithful, in their callings. And can *theſe* great ends be aimed at too ſoon? Can the poor be *too ſoon reſcued* from the dreadful influence of infidelity, ſcepticiſm, and profaneneſs,—which looſen all the bonds of ſociety, and all the obligations of conſcience? We hope that, like our worthy though deſpiſed predeceſſors, the *Methodiſts*, who were ſo much oppoſed and haraſſed when they ſet out, *we* ſhall alſo ſhow to all the world, that we are the friends of good order and ſociety, abhor concealed deſigns, and are

full of good wiſhes to the preſent and immortal intereſts of mankind.* If we liſten to the ſoothing voice of procraſtination, and to the pleas of ſelf-ſparing caution, and of fear, which ſtarts at every ruſtling breeze, we ſhall never rouſe from our indolence; but ſtill dreaming, go on to ſay, "'tis too ſoon to riſe; yet a little ſleep, a "little ſlumber; the time is not yet come."

Having conſidered ſome objections which have occurred to me, I will now requeſt the candid and ſerious reader, who has the beſt intereſts of mankind at heart, to determine whether there is any thing ſo formidable in our efforts, as our ſuſpicious and hard-judging opponents would, both from the pulpit and the preſs, perſuade the people to believe? Sermons and Appeals ſound the alarm; "the Clergy and every "ſound patriot are rouſed to undeceive the de-"luded multitude, and to ſtrip off the hypo-

* What wonderful, viſible, moral effects, through a divine bleſſing, have been wrought by the preaching of the Methodiſts, among the Colliers, at Kingſwood, near Briſtol, and at Newcaſtle; the tinners in Cornwall, and many others; who, before, were the terror of all around them, are well known, by all that have inquired into theſe matters; and have been candidly acknowledged by eminent perſons, and on ſolemn occaſions. Very conſiderable and increaſing are the effects of our Village Preaching in the reſpects abovementioned. Many have been delivered from total ignorance, vice, and miſery, and brought to the knowledge and experience of ſalvation; and from being burdens and plagues, have become bleſſings and comforts to their fellow-creatures:—and will any good man repine at this?

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critical veil from our political deſigns;" and are told that they "cannot be too *circumſpect*, "too *vigilant*, and too ſuſpicious of all our move- "ments, both religious and political." (p. 34.) When I firſt caſt my eye on thoſe two words, "circumſpect and vigilant," I was ready to hope that this Writer, under the maſk of a clerical character, was about to recommend to his reverend brethren more *perſonal circumſpection*, as to their own conduct and example; and, from the apparent zeal of the people he wiſhes to expoſe, intended to urge them to greater *paſtoral vigilance* in their reſpective pariſhes. But, alas! what follows ſoon manifeſted that his intention was to excite them, not to *look at home*, but *abroad*;—not *into themſelves*, and *after their flocks*, but to ſcrutinize with a prying eye the dark deſigns of theſe inſidious men. *They*, however, are not much concerned about the matter, on their own account. A man who carries about him an habitual ſenſe of the all-ſeeing eye of God, needs not be afraid of the impartial ſearch of man. Conſcious that he indulges no impure motives, and that he wiſhes to act with prudence and conſiſtency, he can ſay,—"Search me, O God, and try me; "nor would I ſhrink from the inſpection of the "righteous and the wiſe among my fellow- "creatures."

If by this "vigilance" is intended a diſpoſition ſimilar to that of the jealous Saul, when it is

ſaid (I. Sam. xviii. 9.) "*that he* EYED *David* "*from that day forward;*" or to the temper of the Scribes and Prieſts, when they "*watched* "*Jeſus, and ſent forth ſpies which ſhould feign* "*themſelves juſt men, that they might take hold of his* "*words, that ſo they might deliver him unto the power* "*and authority of the governor;*" (Luke xx. 19, 20.)—if this be their ſpirit,—I can only ſay, with Solomon,—"*Who is able to ſtand before Envy?*"—It is a mercy for men of upright characters, that God will either "keep them from the ſtrife of "tongues," or, ſhould they labour under unmerited obloquy for a time, He will bring forth, in due ſeaſon, their righteouſneſs as the morning. In the mean while they can look up, though ſtill ſurrounded with darkneſs, and ſay,—"Our "witneſs is above, our record is on high." And wilful ſlanderers and ſpies would do well to conſider the words of Elihu (Job xxxiv. 11.): "*For* "*the work of a man ſhall He* (God) *render unto* "*him, and cauſe every man to find according to* "*his ways.*"

But the groſs and malignant miſrepreſentations of our principles and motives, and the alarming inſinuations which have been thrown out reſpecting our *deſigns*, appear to be intended to excite the jealouſy of the civil magiſtrate, "to check at an early period" what is called our "luxuriant growth:" and I doubt not but

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it is the wiſh of ſome to enrage the common people againſt us and our Itinerants. However, while conſcious of acting in a way of duty, and according to the laws of the land, we muſt leave events with Him whom we ſerve. But the friends of evangelical religion, and of the ſouls of men, have too much reliance on the beneficence of our gracious SOVEREIGN,* the wiſdom of his *Parliament*, and the ſagacity and knowledge of his *Counſellors*, — to apprehend THEY will be influenced, by ſuſpicious, bigoted and intereſted men, to attempt to abridge us of our privileges, or check us in our honeſt endeavours to oppoſe infidelity, vice, and ſedition; to promote truth and peace, virtue and ſubordination, — until it is proved we are the artful villains we have been ſo injuriouſly repreſented. Or, ſhould any ariſe, who may take advantage, under a veil of hypocriſy, to carry on political deſigns; or any wretches ſo depraved, as to aſſume the itinerant character, on purpoſe to bring it into diſgrace; —we cordially rely on the wiſdom, juſtice, and candour of thoſe in power, to make *due diſcrimination* between the guilty and the innocent.

* It has been often reported, that when ſome perſons applied to his Majeſty's royal grandfather, George II. for ſuppreſſing the preaching of Whitefield, Weſley, and the Methodiſts, the King replied, "Let thoſe who complain out-preach them, and out-live "them;" and told them "there ſhould be no perſecution in his reign."

It has been long proved by a *ſeries of hiſtory*, from the time of the Iſraelites in Egypt to later days, that the more religious people have been oppreſſed, the more they have increaſed; and therefore prudent men, in ſtations of eminence and power, have reaſoned as Gamaliel did: (Acts v. 38, 39.) "And now I ſay unto you, "refrain from theſe men, and let them alone; "for if this counſel, or this work, be of man, it "will come to nought: but if it be of God ye "cannot overthrow it, leſt haply ye be found "to fight againſt God."

But if, through the miſrepreſentations of pride, envy, miſtake, or bigoted averſion, a ſtorm of perſecution ſhould be raiſed, and blow in the cold and ſharp-cutting diſdain of thoſe who were our *former* friends,—or in the fierce and fervid tempeſt of *authorized perſecution*, and *popular rage*;—ſhould reproach, cruel mockings, falſe accuſations, threatenings, haraſſings await us;—ſhould even *worſe things than theſe befal us*,—we humbly pray, and doubt not, even in theſe luke-warm days, that ſome will be found who ſimply aim at God's glory; that the Lord Almighty will ſtand by them; ſtrengthen them by His word and Spirit, ſtill to act, as Scripture and conſcience ſhall dictate; and enable them to ſay, "whether "it be right in the ſight of God, to hearken "unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for

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"we cannot but ſpeak the things which we "have ſeen and heard." (Acts iv. 19, 20.)

And now will my Brethren, throughout the kingdom, who have been engaged in the *ſupport* or *performance* of this labour of love, which I have attempted to deſcribe and vindicate in the preceding pages, excuſe me while I addreſs a few hints to them. I honour and applaud their zeal; I rejoice in their ſucceſs; and though there has not been, as I have ever heard, any juſt occaſion given, for the cruel inſinuations of our adverſaries, yet,

"Fas eſt et ab hoſte doceri."

Let us derive profit from their bitterneſs; and, inſtead of giving way to revenge, learn more than ever to exerciſe the ſpirit of our Bleſſed Maſter; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again,—prayed for his enemies,—and returned good for evil. Let us be doubly cautioned againſt introducing any thing into our diſcourſes, but the great doctrines and duties of the New Teſtament. Let us ever ſhow that the Goſpel we preach, recommends and enforces, by the moſt perſuaſive arguments, good order and ſubordination in ſociety, from the higheſt to the loweſt; and is an utter enemy to a *rebellious* and *levelling ſpirit*. When oppoſed by men who are blinded by their prejudices, pride, or avarice, let us watch over our temper, and bridle our

tongues. Never let us ſpeak againſt the whole body of the Clergy, and the whole Church, becauſe of the faults of ſome of her faithleſs and ungodly ſons; and even when we have opportunity, let us not wantonly publiſh their failings. Let us continue, at all times, to pray for our SOVEREIGN, for the QUEEN, and the ROYAL FAMILY; for divine direction to thoſe who are at the helm of the ſtate; for the ſafety, peace, and proſperity of the nation; for the propagation of the glorious Goſpel, and of pure and undefiled religion; and that there may be a *great revival of it* in the Eſtabliſhment, as well as out of it.* Let us rejoice in the zeal, the diligence, and ſucceſs of pious and evangelical Miniſters of the Church of England; and avoid all rudeneſs and incivility, and pay all the reſpect which is due, towards them whoſe principles we cannot approve. Let us put on "bowels of mercies, kindneſs, humbleneſs of "mind, meekneſs, long-ſuffering, forbearing one "another, and forgiving one another, even as "Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye."

Give me leave, dear Brethren, to add, let us *prepare for the croſs.* The enemy of Chriſt and ſouls, we have reaſon to fear, will not permit any inroads to be made on his Kingdom of

* Mr. Philip Henry, wherever he preached, uſually prayed for the pariſh miniſter, and for a bleſſing upon his miniſtry. (See his Life, 3rd edit. p. 106.)

Darkneſs

Darkneſs and Vice, without exciting ſome fierce oppoſition againſt us, in ſome form or other. Let us count the coſt; and look well to the grounds of our confidence, and the ſecret ſprings of our conduct. While we watch and pray againſt every evil temper, and imprudent action, under a pretence of boldneſs and zeal for God, that may give any *juſt cauſe* of offence to any one, among either Clergy or Laity, let us expect reproaches, revilings, and to have our names caſt out as evil. But let us alſo recollect our Lord's words: — (Matt. v. 11, 12.) "Bleſſed are ye "when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, "and ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſely "for my ſake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, "for great is your reward in Heaven; for ſo "perſecuted they the Prophets which were be-"fore you." Thus did the Papiſts treat our excellent Reformers of the Church of England.*

Thus

* Biſhop Jewel, in his "Apology for the Church of England," complains of the accuſations of the Roman Catholics againſt him and his brethren, who ſeparated from them: which I inſert, becauſe they are ſo very ſimilar to the *invectives* which are thrown out by ſome intemperate writers *againſt us*, in the preſent age.—"They roar out," ſays he, "in all places, that we are *heretics*,—"that we are wicked men,—that we deſpiſe all good actions,—that "our buſineſs and deſign is the *ſubverting monarchies and kingdoms*,—"that we have made a tumultuous defection from the Catholic "Church, and have diſturbed the quiet of the Church by a de-"teſtable *ſchiſm*,—that we deſpiſe the authority of the Fathers "and

Thus did the worldly-minded and profane enemies of real Chriſtianity, inſult and abuſe pious

"and primitive Councils," &c. (Jewel's Apology, pp. 5, 6, 8vo. edit. 1685.)

He replies to each of theſe; but I cannot perſuade myſelf to omit what this excellent-ſpirited Prelate ſays particularly on one charge of a treaſonable nature.

"It would have been a great affliction to us, to be thus hatefully accuſed of ſo great a crime as *treaſon*, but that we know "that Chriſt himſelf and his Apoſtles, and an infinite number of "other pious Chriſtians, have been made the objects of public envy, "on the ſame pretence; for Chriſt, though he commanded to *render to Cæſar the things which were Cæſar's*, yet he was accuſed of "ſedition, in that he was ſaid to deſign a change in the government, and to affect and intend a kingdom; and ſo they loudly "charged him before the tribunal of Pilate,—*If thou letteſt this man "go*, (ſay they) *thou art no friend to Cæſar*. And the Apoſtles, "although they conſtantly taught that we ought to obey magiſtrates, and that every ſoul ſhould be ſubject to the higher powers, "—and that not only for fear of wrath and puniſhment, but alſo "for conſcience ſake;—yet they were ſaid to ſtir up the people, "and to incite the multitude to rebellion. Haman brought the "Jews into the diſfavour of Ahaſuerus, by repreſenting them as a "ſtubborn and rebellious people, that deſpiſed the edicts and laws of "princes. The wicked king Ahab charged Elijah, the prophet of "God, that he troubled Iſrael. Amaziah, the prieſt of Bethel, "accuſed Amos, the prophet, of a conſpiracy, before Jeroboam;—"*And behold, ſaith he, Amos hath conſpired againſt thee, in the midſt of "the houſe of Iſrael; and the land is not able to bear all his words.* In "ſhort, Tertullian ſaith this was the general accuſation againſt all "Chriſtians in his time, that they were traitors, plotters, and the "common enemies of mankind. And therefore if truth, which is "ſtill the ſame, ſuffers the ſame reproaches as it did formerly, it may "indeed ſeem troubleſome and uneaſy, but it is not unuſual." (Jewel's Apology, pp. 55, 56.)

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and zealous Miniſters of the Goſpel in the laſt century.* And could ſome have their wiſh, we doubt not, that bonds of reſtraint would now be laid upon us, and that we muſt either be ſilenced or ſuffer. O may we be enabled to put a proper eſtimate on every thing of an earthly nature; hold worldly fame, property, and even perſonal liberty, with a looſe hand, not knowing the things that may befal us. Finally, let me leave you with the advice of St. Paul, as far as it may be applicable:—(II. Cor. vi. 3—7.) "Giving "no offence in any thing, that the Miniſtry be "not blamed: but in all things approving our-"ſelves as the Miniſters of God, — in much "patience, in afflictions, in neceſſities, in diſ-"treſſes, in ſtripes, in impriſonments, in tumults, "in labours, in watchings, in faſtings, by pure-"neſs, by knowledge, by long-ſuffering, by kind-"neſs, by the Holy Ghoſt, by love unfeigned, "by the word of truth, by the power of God, "by the armour of righteouſneſs on the right "hand and on the left."

With regard to the *Clergy of the Eſtabliſhment*, I hope I have ſaid nothing throughout theſe ſheets, diſreſpectful of thoſe who "fulfil their "miniſtry." It has been my happineſs, in common with others of my brethren, to be acquainted

* See Calamy's "Account of Ejected Miniſters;" and Palmer's "Nonconformiſts' Memorial," *paſſim*.

with

with ſome of the Order, whom we have loved and honoured. We have read the writings of the Clergy, on various ſubjects, with delight and improvement. We cordially pray for and rejoice in their ſucceſs,—in promoting the knowledge of the pure Goſpel. Glad ſhould we be to ſee *Incumbents*, and their *Curates*, going forth on the afternoons and evenings of *Sundays*, and on the *Weekdays*, into thoſe Villages and Hamlets within their own precincts, where there are no pariſh churches, to preach faithfully, and to teach from houſe to houſe, the ſoul-reviving and ſoul-ſanctifying truths of their Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy.* Let *them* be the leading labourers in this abundant harveſt, and gather in as many ſheaves as they can; *we* will follow them as gleaners, to pick up what they may leave; nay, we will go into another part of the wide field, where the huſbandmen are few or negligent. It is not our aim to *make proſelytes to a party*, by preaching about *eccleſiaſtical* any more than *civil polities*. It is not our wiſh to bring one man from the Church of England, to become a *mere, notional, formal, rigid Diſſenter*. We are not ſuch bigots

* I beg leave to point to an eminent pattern, in the late excellent and Rev. Mr. Grimſhaw, Curate of Haworth, in Yorkſhire. (See an Account of him in "Biographia Evangelica," vol. IV. p. 394.) I am happy to hear, that a more complete hiſtory of that wonderful man, than has yet appeared, is about to be publiſhed by a venerable Clergyman of London.

as to confine ſalvation within the circle of a ſect, as ſome, alas! within the pale of a church:* but we long for the diſobedient to be turned from the error of his way, unto that which is lawful and right; for the wicked to forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and to return unto the Lord, &c. It would fill our hearts with delight and exultation, to

* Our Author, with another modern writer, with whom he appears to have been pretty converſant, *(even though he could "admit our motives to be excluſively religious, and not political")* has "denounced" us guilty of the "dangerous and enormous crime of ſchiſm" from the "Holy Catholic Church;" for he declares that, "by withdrawing from the Eſtabliſhed Church, *without a juſt cauſe*, we withdraw all communion with Chriſt, and forfeit all the promiſed bleſſings of the goſpel covenant; for," ſays he, "we are no longer parties in this covenant, than while we are members of the Holy Catholic Church; and no man can be a member of this Church, who obſerves not conſtant communion with her." (p. 43.)——But is there not an "Holy" *Roman* "Catholic Church," from which the *Church of England* has ſeparated and diſſented?—and has not ſhe, as the injured and bereft parent, brought aloud, in her flouriſhing days, not only the charges of ſchiſm and hereſy, but of the worſt of crimes, againſt her rebellious daughter, (ſo ſhe would call her) for her elopement, and taking her fortune away with her?—And did not ſhe denounce the moſt tremendous anathemas againſt her, for ſo doing, "*without a juſt cauſe?*"—And doubtleſs the "Holy" *Roman* "Catholic Church," like our Author, took upon *herſelf* to be the infallible judge of the *juſtneſs of that cauſe*.——We thank God, that we know, that communion with Chriſt, and the bleſſings of the goſpel covenant, are not confined, as he or others may imagine, to any outward community. And I heartily pray, that he and they may enjoy more of them, to whatever Church they may belong.

hear

hear that multitudes of poor ſinners, hitherto negligent of their ſalvation, were flocking to hear the joyful ſound of the Goſpel,—"thoſe fun-"damental Doctrines of Chriſtianity which have "not been ſufficiently inculcated," (p. 18.)—from the lips of ſpiritual, zealous, able miniſters, in their *own pariſh churches;* and to ſee them happy in the poſſeſſion of ſpiritual peace and patience, and in the practice of evangelical holineſs.

And might I be permitted to offer a hint to the Clergy of the Eſtabliſhment, as to the MEANS *moſt likely* to be effectual to ſuppreſs Village Preaching by Diſſenters, and to revive real religion in the Church of England, throughout the land?—I would ſay, it is not to *miſrepreſent, malign,* and *perſecute* them; but to exceed or equal them in labour, and to *render their aſſiſtance unneceſſary.** It will be expedient

* In the mean while it would be happy, if the Clergy were like the Miniſter of Oſweſtry; who, when Mr. Philip Henry (the father of the celebrated Expoſitor of the Bible) viſited him, after he had preached a lecture in his pariſh, and told him, he had been ſowing a handful of ſeed among his people, replied, "That's well; the "Lord proſper your ſeed and mine too: there is need enough of "us both." (P. Henry's Life, 3rd edit. p. 106.) It is with pleaſure I can bring teſtimony to this candour in the preſent age. I have been credibly informed, that an ingenious and worthy clergyman has acknowledged, to his honour, that "his pariſh has been greatly "reformed, ſince the Methodiſts (ſo called) have preached in it;" and for that reaſon encourages rather than oppoſes them. I make no doubt there are many more ſuch inſtances.

for

for them to rouſe from their ſupineneſs,—from that "almoſt univerſal lukewarmneſs and indif-"ference in Chriſtians reſpecting *the eſſentials* "of their religion, the peculiar grounds of their "faith, of their hopes and their fears," which a modern Prelate* acknowledges and laments. Let them attend to their late Primate, Archbiſhop Secker, in his firſt Charge to the Clergy of Canterbury Dioceſe; which has theſe remarkable words:—"You muſt be aſſiduous in teaching "the principles, not only of virtue and natural "religion but of the Goſpel; not as almoſt ex-"plained away by modern refiners, but as the "truth is in Jeſus. You muſt ſet forth the ori-"ginal corruption of our nature; our redemp-"tion according to God's eternal purpoſe in "Chriſt, by the ſacrifice of the croſs; our ſanc-"tification by the influences of the Divine "Spirit; the inſufficiency of our good works, "and the efficacy of faith unto ſalvation."

It will be neceſſary for them to preach with a commanding energy and a tender pathos; to over-come the hearers, as Biſhop Hopkins did, "aut "ſuavitate aut vi;" not to ſpeak the moſt ſolemn *realities* with a cold indifference, as if they were *fictions* and *fables;* but as thoſe who, "knowing "the terrors of the Lord, perſuade men," urging them, with all earneſtneſs, to "flee from the wrath to come," and, as though "God did be-

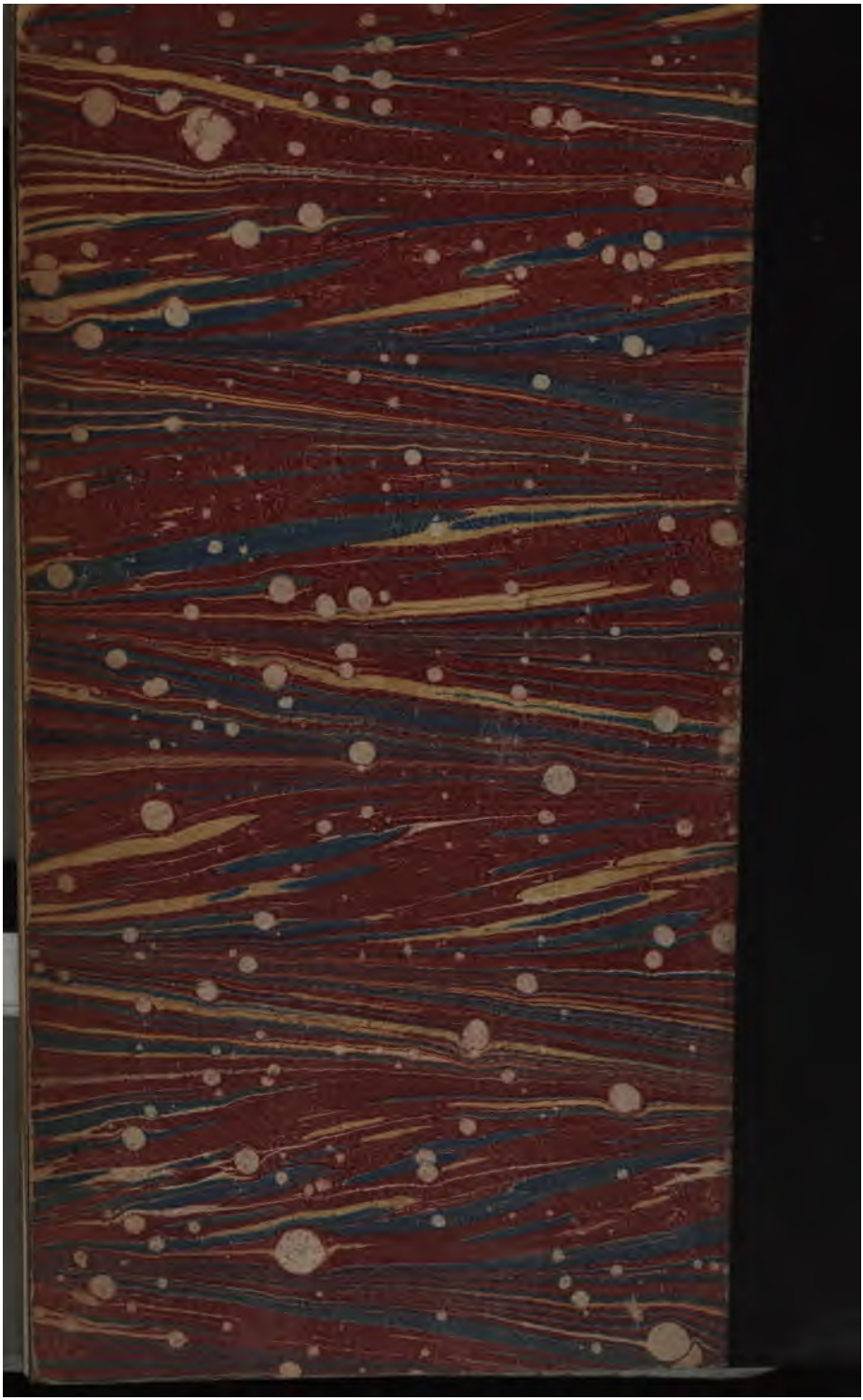
* The Biſhop of Durham.

"ſeech"

"ſeech" ſinners by them, to "*pray*" them, "in "Chriſt's ſtead," to be "reconciled to God."

In a word, the Clergy muſt attend *perſonally* and diligently to their Flocks; and *exemplify* what they *preach* and *teach*, in ſpirit and in conduct,—if they would put an end to Village Preaching.—But perhaps I ſhall be eſteemed impertinent in theſe obſervations, even though they tend to ſuppreſs the practice that is exclaimed againſt as ſo formidable. I will therefore conclude, in the words of a venerable Clergyman of their own Church, which, with very little alteration, will ſuit the preſent ſubject.—"The nation "hath been much alarmed of late with reports con-"cerning the growth and increaſe of Methodiſm. "Would we put a ſtop to the further progreſs of it? "—There is one way by which it may be done; "and let us of the Eſtabliſhed Clergy join hand "and heart in the work; viz. to live more holily, "pray more fervently, preach more heavenly, and "labour more diligently, than the Methodiſt "Miniſters appear to do. Then ſhall we ſoon "hear that Field Preaching is at an end; and "Chriſtians will flock to the Churches to hear us, "as they now flock to the Fields to hear them."*

* "The Scripture Doctrine of Grace," by J. Andrews, LL.B. of St. Mary Hall, Oxford; p. 222, note.

ERRATUM.—p. 40, l. 20, *for* County, *read* Country.

THE END.